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ABSTRACT

The Nueva Day School and Learning Center presents itself in this paper as a case study in school humanization. The project attempts to make students into consumers of the system, able to pick and choose among options, rather than its products. Serving as the means for organizing change is a curriculum development model that includes a progression through determination of philosophy and program characteristics, needs assessment, new skills needed by staff; program objectives, program strategies, program evaluation, and program renewal. The first steps of establishing a philosophical foundation and program ingredients were accomplished by a two day discussion among twenty-five parents, students, and staff. Implementation of the later steps was left to staff who looked to those among their number with special skills and to those outside the school with professional techniques and experience to offer. To understand what the school has accomplished in the humanization of the school environment, educators are invited to spend at least two weeks working in the school during the school year. (JH)

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Nueva
DAY SCHOOL and LEARNING CENTER

HUMANIZING SCHOOLS—A CASE STUDY

Occasional Paper No. 3

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NUEVA DAY SCHOOL AND LEARNING CENTER
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There is currently much rhetoric about establishing school climates which emphasize the individual and his self-worth as well as to the group with which he works and plays.

While the rhetoric is important, those who proclaim the need seldom suggest solutions or approaches which might be tried.

No one has the formula for re-constituting our schools. This paper does not suggest the design for all schools, but it does underscore the highlights of a planned program at the Nueva Day School and Learning Center.

The plan may be no better or no worse than efforts elsewhere. This paper is intended only to assist others who have an interest in the humane elements of education. If any school, as a result of this paper, is able to provide a climate for parents, students, and staff which offers the opportunity for self-dignity, then we will have made our contribution.

INTRODUCTION

Rationale. Following Sputnik there was a scramble throughout the politico-educo community in the United States which stemmed from a feeling that our survival was based on our ability to mass-produce scientists, mathematicians, and foreign language experts. In short, our masses needed to have greater know-how in the technological areas than the Russians.

There is considerable evidence that our emphasis on selected disciplines caused us to ignore our concern for man's relationship to himself and to other men. The analytical skills which were developed in our special science and mathematics programs may have been the impetus which caused the pendulum to swing back to a more humanistic approach. Many young Americans began to question some of our philosophical assumptions and caused many of us to re-examine some of the premises on which we had based our programs. While few educators would consider destroying the system to bring about change, there are also few who would argue that the system needs to change. The change needed is characterized by present concerns for students. The student, years ago, was a "product" which came out of a mold on the assembly line. Today he should be, can be, might be, more of a consumer picking and choosing between and among many options.

Such words as love, warmth, positive self-image, and respect for others characterize the quiet revolution in the move to a more humane climate.

Framework. As the need for change has been recognized, educational leaders have looked for guidance, and for tools to use to reconstruct a framework badly in need of renovation. The literature is replete with visions of grandeur, usually generated by someone well-removed and isolated from the daily hand-to-hand combat we find in many of our schools. But when one moves from the question of what to change to how to do it the literature is meager. Solid answers backed by validated research and development are non-existent.

Although the literature is slim, three helpful documents are:

- *The Principal as the School's Climate Leader: A New Role for the Principalship.* CFK Ltd. Occasional Paper, 3333 South Bannock, Englewood, Colorado 80110.
- *Creating Humane Schools.* Don E. Glines, Campus Publishers, Box 1005, Mankato, Minnesota 56001.
- *Diagnosing the Professional Climate of Your School.* (Unpublished Manuscript), Robert S. Fox, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1970.

The first paper is particularly helpful as one considers both the importance of a humane environment in schools and the characteristics of a school with a humane environment. For example, in a school which possesses a humanistic climate we would expect to see such things as:

Pluralistic reward systems, open communications, involvement in decision-making and problem solving, staff self-renewal, group and school norms, beliefs and values which are public and respected, pluralistic performance expectations, rules and regulations cooperatively determined, influential people in leadership positions are authentic, warm and sensitive, flexible use of time, facilities and human and material resources, flexible, open-ended curriculum, multiple learning environments, self-discipline and responsibility, efficient logistical systems, pluralistic extracurricular programs.

Many of the foregoing terms are vague and require clearer definition, but they still offer guides to school personnel who will take the time to transform the global terms into daily practice. At least the terms provide a launching platform for elaboration.

Creating Humane Schools offers a wide variety of alternatives for updating the global concept characteristics. Many people would reject the ideas in the book as impractical, unreasonable, or undesirable, but it is for teachers, students, and parents to determine which specific matters are applicable to their location. Obviously some ideas acceptable and applicable to people in one location may be rejected by different people in other locations.

Box Fox and others have been leaders in improving the climate of schools. They have generated a number of tools and instruments that are helpful in diagnosis and evaluation. Anyone who has attempted to write behavioral objectives in the affective domain has the task of determining how he will evaluate the accomplishment of objectives.

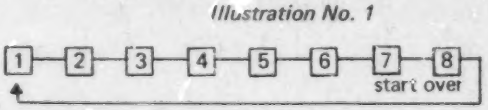
DESIGNATION OF A MODEL

Elements in a Model. As a result of studies we found many ideas which were both challenging and provoking. The task was complex and we often found ourselves jumping from one issue to another, sometimes reflecting on philosophical considerations, and in the next instant switching to problems of trying to evaluate actual outcomes. This left us frustrated, anxious and often confused.

To help in our thinking it was necessary to design a system of diverse elements which when pieced together would result in an integrated approach providing both a common frame of reference for all as well as discrete guidelines to help move from one position in the system to another.

The total system was designed by Nueva's professional staff, expanding upon a curriculum development model offered by someone with knowledge of systems design. The following illustration depicts the elements within the total system.

Illustration No. 1



1. Philosophy
2. Characteristics
3. Needs assessment
4. New skills needed by staff
5. Program objectives
6. Program strategies
7. Program evaluation
8. Program renewal

The beginning point was with a practical philosophy. This was followed by discussions to determine program characteristics needed to support the philosophy. As with most schools we believed we were doing some things very well, but a needs assessment seemed to be in order. The needs assessment was to determine what already existed, existing voids, and where additional impetus was desirable.

As we began to consider program characteristics, it appeared that many of us would need to learn new skills. We found this task of considering our own weaknesses difficult, but essential.

When program activities were determined, specific objectives were established by staff members. Supplementing this activity were discussions of strategies for implementation and evaluation.

Through use of the model it was possible to pick up a single idea and follow it through a continuous cycle, fitting the pieces into the system design where they made most sense.

Strategies for Accomplishment. We realized we had taken on as much as we could possibly handle. By looking at the model and simulating the activities in progression from philosophy through the program renewal sequence we began to analyze staff strengths and weaknesses.

Almost immediately we were cognizant of the fact that we needed more skills than we possessed. We decided we either had to learn to write behavioral objectives and to conduct problem solving exercises or we had to find other people to do them for us. As a staff we decided we wanted the new skills in-house eliminating the dependence on external resources.

Initially, at least some staff determined a need for:

- Skills in conducting small group discussions
- Skills in problem solving techniques
- Skills in writing behavioral objectives
- Skills in identifying and using needs assessment instruments
- Skills in communication
- Skills in designing and utilizing a systematic approach to evaluation
- Skills in redeploying staff time for greater utilization and efficiency
- Skills in making arrangements for self and program renewal alternatives.

Initial concerns were pretty accurate even though at first they appeared overwhelming. The commitment to the system was required and the commitment has increased as rewards for satisfactory progress have been realized.

While acquisition of the new skills appeared to be formidable challenges, as we entered into the sequence of activities it became obvious that though our first thoughts were correct, we found it necessary to go beyond the eight items mentioned—and we are continuing to find that new techniques must be found. We have been fortunate in locating the techniques and skills elsewhere, that is, other people know how to do many of the things and we have attempted to learn their skills, incorporating them into our system.

A BEGINNING

Philosophy. Two staff decisions helped establish procedures for developing a philosophy. The first dealt with the make-up of the group that would develop the philosophy. The second dealt with how to keep the discussion going even when agreement on a specific point could not be reached.

An arbitrary decision was made to have twenty-five people participate in the discussions; these included parents, students, and staff. Eleven staff members, seven parents, and seven students made up the discussion team. The students represented different classes, different cultural backgrounds, etc. Parents also represented a wide variety of backgrounds. No parents who had children participating in the discussions were chosen.

Everyone accepted the invitation to participate. On the first day, some loosening up exercises were conducted in which each person was introduced, then the charge was given to the group. It included these guides:

- Explanation outlining the seriousness of purpose that staff members felt for the task.
- Time and format parameters were established. From a brainstorming session, ideas began to emerge. These ideas, though a cut and paste procedure carried out by a member of the group, were put together in such a way that clusters of ideas seemed to fit. At this time, there were sixteen clusters.

The second day of work involved two tasks: analyzing the clusters, and writing an acceptable philosophy. The groups reconvened the second day. They reviewed the clusters to see which items fit under the headings which had been adapted and to determine if any idea should be shifted from one category to another. All items where a consensus could not be reached were discarded. The small groups had little difficulty re-assigning the ideas into categories; one group reduced the number of clusters from sixteen to seven and another group increased the number from sixteen to twenty-three.

The chairman asked for and received permission to make two additional guideline suggestions. The first suggestion dealt with number of categories and the second entailed the number of words included in each philosophical principle. Four words were permitted to describe each principle. This decision was made to reduce the tendency to hash and re-hash opinions and to reduce what amounted to differences in semantics.

The next step was to determine the kinds of activities one might find in a school where a given philosophy was present.

The total group participated in the synthesizing process, and arrived at nine philosophical principles. These included:

- Instruction should be individual
- Many options for learning
- Opportunity for human service
- Positive reinforcement should prevail
- Individual and group responsibilities
- Obligation for research and development
- Responsibility for being accountable
- Shared responsibility for decision making
- Right to be wrong.

After agreement was reached on these points, the group again broke into four small groups to brainstorm for forty-five minutes on all of the activities a school might undertake—given the population of Nueva—which would put into practice the philosophical principles. When the group returned there was a combined listing of 156 different activities.

A teacher pointed out the futility of trying to meet programmatic expectations for all 156 activities. We agreed that the expectations were overly ambitious. We also agreed on the importance of maintaining some consensus on our selections, and of covering all the points in the philosophy.

Since the activities were all tested under their respective philosophical principles the group voted on a priority order within each of the categories. All participants were asked to indicate the top four activities in each category. By a simple show of hands, it was clear that most of us felt strongly and consistently about the first two or three items in each category; we also agreed consistently on the activities believed out of line or unrealistic. Considerable discussion preceded votes on some of the third items in each category, and on all of the fourth items. In the end we had thirty-six activities—four for each philosophical principle.

If we had known then what we know now, we would have eliminated those activities over which there was reasonable debate because we have found we probably took on more than we could handle. We suspect that between twenty-four and twenty-seven activities would have been reasonable.

During a period of two days we were not only able to state philosophically what we believed, but we were also able to say how we expected to practice what we preached.

(The philosophy and activities discussions were invaluable as guidelines for the staff, and invaluable to parents who wished to consider educational alternatives. Parents should send children to Nueva only if the philosophy of parents and the school match. This point has application for public schools if we could begin offering a large number of educational alternatives within a given community.)

Characteristic Activities. Listed below are some specific activities that came from ordering of priorities. The number which precedes the statement corresponds to those philosophical principles stated earlier.

1. a. Elimination of report cards.
   b. Complete development of individualized mathematics program.
2. a. Offerings of diverse electives.
   b. Offerings into such pre-electives as ballet, special types of physical education, etc.
3. a. Opportunities for older children to work with younger children in both academic and non-academic areas.
   b. Opportunities for some children to raise money through musical concerts for handicapped children in Palo Alto.
4. a. Special attention given to "praise comments."
   b. Opportunities for exhibition of student work.
5. a. Use of independent student contacts.
   b. Schoolwide activities in which everyone has a responsibility (such as Thanksgiving Dinner).
6. a. Each staff member has one research and development activity.
   b. Research proposals are accepted from outside individuals and agencies.
7. a. Each staff member participates in training programs to establish accountability.
   b. Each staff member makes public and explicit specific objectives and evidences that objectives have been met.
8. a. All school meetings are held to discuss problems and solutions.
   b. Special *ad hoc* parent committees are established to work on given concerns, e.g., drug education, bus matters, etc.
9. a. Special communication memos are established to help everyone know what the other is doing.
   b. Support is given to good ideas, even if they don't work: Promoters have the opportunity to back off gracefully and without embarrassment when experiments don't work.

Skills Necessary. There was stimulating debate, give and take, and enthusiastic support for one position or another. The combination of trust and skills, we believe, helped us accomplish our goals. We can identify the skills which were useful: we are neither certain how the mutual trust for one another was obtained nor how to pass this information along to others. We can identify the following skills:

1. Skills for small group work
   a. Guidelines established by total group chairman
   b. Goals and objectives clearly stated
   c. Identification of small group chairman
   d. Format and time parameters established

Most of our help in this important area came from two sources—training from people who have conducted workshops for the National Training Laboratory in Bethel, Maine, and resource ideas gleaned from an excellent publication by Allan Clatthorn entitled *Learning in the Small Group.*[1]

2. Skills in problem solving techniques
   a. Force field analysis
   b. Brainstorming
   c. Order of priorities

Fortunately we had worked with others—National Training Laboratory and a special session conducted by representatives from CFK, Ltd. (Bob Fox and B. Frank Brown)—and had learned how to use the first two techniques fairly adequately. To learn about the skill required for c. above it was necessary for us to use both a. and b. and to come up with our own acceptable devices for voting on the ordering of priorities.

There were undoubtedly other communication techniques but these emerged more from intuition than from pre-planning. In essence, we tried to make certain that everyone was heard no matter how divergent or how repetitious his thought. The time and format limitations were important devices for limiting tangential excursions.

Subsequent to early efforts we were fortunate to meet Dr. Dennis Smith of Memphis State University who has developed a two-day packaged format entitled "We Agree Workshop."[2] The sixteen page guide provides procedures and helpful forms for arriving at a sound philosophy on which most people can agree.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING INDIVIDUAL IMPROVEMENTS

After agreeing on the philosophical foundations and the ingredients of the program, staff members, parents, and children agreed generally that the professional staff should assume responsibility for implementing the plans.

This task was one which had been anticipated by the staff during the pre-planning days, and our expectations proved to be correct. What became very clear very quickly was our own inadequacies.

As we analyzed our paths for the future it seemed to use that at least four different new skills were desirable. These included:

- Techniques for overcoming constraints—such as finances, equipment, etc.
- Techniques for defining behavioral objectives in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.
- Techniques for determining ways and kinds of evidences that would be acceptable as accomplishment of objectives.
- Techniques for determining research designs and evaluative procedures for assessing our program effectiveness.

Fortunately some of our staff had been involved in programs where one or more of the techniques needed had been learned. Force field analysis was one technique found to be of particular value on many, many instances. Perhaps this was of most value because we took the position that any program activities were possible if only we could overcome the constraints.

By using the force field techniques we were able to consider our reasons for developing and implementing specific activities. We also were able to consider avenues that would help us move toward objectives as well as obstacles which stood in our way. The force field technique is one which helps school staffs consider priorities and options for overcoming obstacles.

Once program constraints were considered and suggestions about ways to overcome the obstacles were determined it became the responsibility of each staff member to consider his personal and professional objectives.

Both the Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratory and CFK Ltd. have done developmental work on performance objectives. We used the SWCEL materials. First the director (principal) prepared his objectives: These covered basically four areas:

- Administration
- Curriculum

- Research and Development
- Professional Growth

These objectives were distributed to other members of the staff and discussed. Many of the objectives underscored the affective domain; most of our attention focused on this area.

The next step was to introduce the staff to much of the same training which the principal had undertaken. Six slide-tape presentations accompanied by a workbook for participants were obtained from SWCEL, and two hour and one-half training sessions were held. Each staff member participated in the training sessions and prepared his objectives, making copies available for other staff members. To some, writing objectives was relatively easy. Others struggled for months before the objectives were written. Some staff members received the task of writing objectives with resentment, with anxiety, and sometimes with confusion. Establishing objectives is not easy! There is evidence that when people who make public and explicit statements about anticipated actions, particularly in front of their peers, these actions are very likely to occur. We tried to exploit this psychological principle.

As might be expected, our first adventures with objectives were helpful but not totally satisfying. Frustrations normally came when we presented descriptive lists to other staff members and were met with questions which evolved around the issues of "How will you know?" or "What evidence will you accept?" that objectives have been reached.

We discarded the first question in favor of the latter. But we found that determining evidences that objectives had been accomplished was no easy task. We called upon four basic resources:

1. Professional experience
2. Gage's *Handbook of Research on Teaching*[3]
3. Fox's *Diagnosing the School's Climate*[4]
4. A chapter by Olivero in Beggs' *Independent Study, Bold New Ventures*[5] book.

Considerable time was spent talking with CFK Ltd. Associates including Eugene Howard, George Carnie, the late Charles Kettering, Spencer Wyatt, Edward Brainard, Jud Prentice, Del Lobb, Bill Hall, Dudley Solomon, and others. They have been among the outstanding practitioners of educational innovation; they have been and are now on the cutting edge and are aware of potentials and pitfalls. Their advice was extremely helpful.

Other CFK Ltd. Associates including Cliff Houston, Larry Aggerbeck and Bob Fox were helpful from three other perspectives. Houston had demonstrated the use of skillful interpersonal tools at a number of CFK Ltd. personal interaction sessions, and Fox had prepared an entire publication replete with valuable pre- and post-assessment instruments.

The work of Larry Aggerbeck and his very useful systems management approach to organizing for action gave us the design direction we needed. While we do not use the exact format which Aggerbeck offered, we have followed a very similar plan, combining his work and many ideas from Gage. We were able to develop our own research and development guide.[6] From our studies we decided that one individual has the responsibility to note publicly and directly what evidence he will accept that an objective has been met—and this "evidence" factor is negotiable with other staff members when objectives are presented. All evidences must be stated *a priori*; that is, they must be stated before an activity is undertaken. The format for accomplishing this is outlined around the Quality Performance Program concepts developed by CFK Ltd., establishing six different approaches to evaluation.

The principal had to organize the research and development materials so they could be learned and used by other members of the staff. On two different occasions the principal worked with staff members in group sessions—as well as on numerous occasions with individuals to complete their statements of objectives, their strategies for getting at the objectives, their evidences of acceptable achievement, and their system for getting at their work.

Continuous review of philosophy, activities, objectives, etc. must be built into the system design for the program. Any matter worth accomplishing usually has a number of trial and error episodes. Continuous attention to goals, therefore, must be instantly monitored. People feel cheated if they invest their time and talent on plans for progress and then fail to receive the support so important when maintaining human motivation.

Time for Self-Renewal. To keep at the important issues in our setting two predetermined strategies were utilized. First, staff meetings are held regularly with prepared agendas. The first item on the agenda invariably includes:

- Staff Needs—All Staff
- Research and Development—All Staff
- Etc.

The first item is discussed and ideas are taken from the staff on any issue that will make life at Nueva more livable and rewarding. We attempt to find out what is bothering each member, if anything, and then to do something about the problem before the end of the day. The kinds of things that come up include: freedom from lunch duties, blackout shades for the projection room, etc. By showing that problems can be identified and resolved, it is possible to demonstrate that people are heard and that something happens when problems are brought out in the open.

The second item, research and development, is constantly brought up for review, not only at staff meetings but through the many communication memos that are made available to all staff members (at least once per week). As progress beyond decision points is made, status reports are given in the memos. Not only does this come as a boost to the person doing the research and development, but it enhances communication.

IN RETROSPECT

We do not claim to have all the answers; we state here to our best knowledge the procedures which we have followed to move through our systems model. There are many things we have learned, there are many things remaining to be learned.

This document may be helpful to those who give serious thought to the problems of humanizing schools, but it is our strong belief that we could best demonstrate how the complex pieces of the climate puzzle fit if those interested would consent to work side-by-side with us for no less than two weeks during the regular school year.

This experience, we believe, would help one separate fact from fiction, would provide participants adequate time for analysis and contemplation (impossible in light of the minute-by-minute hassles in most schools), and would offer opportunities to review in depth the professional literature as it relates to a given program of action.

Those interested have a candid challenge and a sincere invitation!

[1] *Learning in the Small Group,* Allan A. Glatthorn, Institute for the Development of Educational Activities, Innovation Dissemination Division, Dayton, Ohio, 1966.

[2] *We Agree Workshop,* Dennis Smith, Memphis State University, Memphis, Tennessee, December, 1971.

[3] Nate Gage, *Handbook of Research on Teaching.*

[4] Fox, Robert S., *Diagnosing the Professional Climate of Your School* (Unpublished manuscript), University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1970.

[5] Olivero in David Beggs, *Independent Study, Bold New Ventures,* University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1962.

[6] *Nueva Day School and Learning Center Plan for Research and Development,* 6565 Skyline Blvd., Hillsborough, California 94010; Winter, 1970. (Under Revision).